STATEMENT OF JOHN D. SWOFFORD
COMMISSIONER OF THE ATLANTIC COAST CONFERENCE

Chairman Rush, Ranking Member Radanovich, and Members of the Committee, I am John Swofford. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss college football, its post-season, and the Bowl Championship Series ("BCS").

I am Commissioner of the Atlantic Coast Conference ("ACC") and have served in that role since July 1997. Before then, I was Director of Athletics at the University of North Carolina, my alma mater, from 1980 to 1997. I have been privileged to spend my entire professional career in the administration of intercollegiate athletics. While in college, I was fortunate to play football for Coach Bill Dooley and had the opportunity to play in two post-season bowl games. Like virtually all student-athletes, I did not move on to the professional ranks. My football career ended when I received my undergraduate degree. But my own experiences in the 1970 Peach Bowl and 1971 Gator Bowl remain among the fondest memories of my athletic career. Both capped very successful seasons for the University of North Carolina and provided great rewards for my teammates and me. Not only did they allow us to test ourselves against fine teams from Arizona State University and the University of Georgia but also offered us the chance to enjoy the hospitality and attractions of the cities of Atlanta and Jacksonville for several days. Throughout my career as an athletic director and as a commissioner, I have worked to ensure that as many college football players as possible have had the same privileges to enjoy the post-season experience and build life-long memories that were accorded to me by my predecessors.

College football and its post-season can only be understood by knowing the history of the game. Rutgers and Princeton played in the first intercollegiate contest in 1869, and the game grew in popularity over the next several decades, as many schools began fielding teams and the rules of the game became standardized. In 1902, even before the formation of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Association, which was then a relatively new organization that held an annual holiday celebration in Southern California, decided to invite the University of Michigan to play in a post-season game against Stanford in what became the first Rose Bowl contest. While that first game was not tremendously successful – it was halted in the third quarter with Michigan leading 49-0 – and was replaced over the next few years with other events, such as chariot races, college football continued to grow in popularity. The Tournament of Roses revived the idea of a post-season college game in January 1916, and the game became a remarkable success. The Rose Bowl has been played annually since that time, and in 1923 moved into a new stadium that still hosts the game. By the late 1920s, the Rose Bowl had grown into a national event, pairing a highly regarded team from a West Coast institution against a highly regarded team from a university in the eastern half of the United States.

In the 1930s, local civic organizations in New Orleans, Miami, and Dallas, joined by hotel and restaurant associations, chambers of commerce, tourism bureaus, and the like, began hosting post-season college football games and a number of ancillary events during the period between Christmas and New Year's Day. Noting the extraordinary success of the Tournament of Roses and the Rose Bowl game, these organizations decided that a college football game could be the centerpiece of a three or four-day event that would attract visitors to a community and fill

hotel rooms and increase patronage at restaurants and other hospitality establishments when business would otherwise be down because of the holiday season. Thus were born the Sugar Bowl, Orange Bowl, and Cotton Bowl, and those events have built traditions and forged places in their respective communities and in the nation's culture that continue to this day. In fact, the Cotton Bowl attracted more than 88,000 fans to its game this season, its largest crowd ever.

The purpose of bowl games in local communities has always been two-fold. First, they aim to generate economic benefits for their host regions by attracting visitors who will come and stay several days. Second, they support charities that provide services locally. Those missions remain largely unchanged. Today, there are 34 post-season college football games, including one in Canada, that generate more than a billion dollars annually in economic impact for their host cities, and return millions of dollars to numerous local charities and philanthropic organizations. They have also returned billions of dollars over the years to participating colleges and universities and provided scholarships and other financial assistance to countless students and student-athletes. The bowls are revered institutions locally and have become part of the fabric of the nation's holiday celebration.

Bowl games did not achieve this lofty status on their own. Over the years, a number of bowls developed individual working relationships with college football conferences. The oldest and longest-standing of these affiliations is between the Tournament of Roses and the Big Ten and Pacific-10 Conferences. Beginning in January 1947, those two conferences agreed to send their champions to play in the Rose Bowl game each year. For the last six decades, the Big Ten and Pacific-10 have sent highly-rated teams to play in the Rose Bowl game. Their fans have bought tickets, filled hotel rooms, and attended other events in conjunction with the Tournament of Roses, thus enabling the Rose Bowl to fill its stadium each year, attract the interest of fans across the nation and lure broadcasters willing to pay substantial rights fees to televise the game. In return, the opportunity to play for a berth in the Rose Bowl has dramatically increased the attractiveness of regular season championship races in the Big Ten and Pacific-10 Conferences. A Rose Bowl berth is the traditional prize for the league championship in those conferences. The Big Ten-Pacific-10 affiliation with the Rose Bowl is as vibrant today as it has ever been.

While it is the oldest of its type, the Rose Bowl arrangement is not the only such relationship. For more than 30 years, the Southeastern Conference ("SEC") has sent it champion annually to play in the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans. Like the Rose Bowl, the Sugar Bowl has benefitted from the passion of SEC fans. By the same token, with the Sugar Bowl as their goal, SEC teams have built a reputation for excellence that is well-known. In addition, for many years, the Cotton Bowl had a similar relationship with the old Southwest Conference, and the Big Eight Conference, whose membership is today part of the Big Twelve Conference ("Big 12"), for decades had a similar relationship with the Orange Bowl. The ACC began a relationship with the Florida Citrus Bowl (now the Capital One Bowl) in the late 1980s, and in the past 10 years we have enjoyed a similar relationship with the Orange Bowl. The Big 12 has a relationship today with the Fiesta Bowl. The existence of these conference-bowl affiliation arrangements has been integral to the success of college bowl games, and understanding them is crucial to understanding the history of the game as a whole.

Another important aspect of college football is that, unlike most professional sports, college football does not consist of one league but many separate leagues. The number of

conferences and the member institutions in each has changed often over the years with some leagues dissolving and new ones developing. Today, there are today 11 different leagues with 117 teams at the highest level of the game, the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision. These conferences range in size from 8 teams to 13 teams. In addition, three teams, the University of Notre Dame, the United States Military Academy, and the United States Naval Academy, compete as independent institutions, meaning that they have chosen not to join any conference for football. Each of these leagues crowns its own champion and negotiates its own bowl relationships. Each conference also negotiates its own contracts for telecasting its regular season football games.

Because college football developed as numerous conferences rather than as a single unified league and has had a successful broad-based bowl system, the member institutions of the NCAA have not believed it necessary to create a championship of all leagues or what has long been referred to by the media and public as a "national champion." The presidents of the universities, through the NCAA, have studied the creation of such a championship many times over the years, but have consistently rejected it in favor of the traditional bowl arrangements.

While there were efforts to rank teams and determine "national champions" as far back as the late 1800s, perhaps the most well-known ranking began when the Associated Press created its college football poll in 1936. The American Football Coaches Association teamed with United Press International in 1950 to publish its own weekly ranking of teams from a panel of coaches. Both the coaches poll, which is now published by *USA Today*, and the AP poll gained wide acceptance by the public and media over the years, and at the end of each season, the highest-ranked team in each has often been declared the best in the nation and thus "national champion." For many years, both the AP and coaches polls determined the national champion based solely on the results of regular season games. By the late 1960s or early 1970s, however, both began to conduct polls after the bowl games, bringing added attention and focus on those games and giving them a role in determining a "national champion."

The organization of college football into multiple independent conferences is also crucial to understanding its economic underpinnings and why post-season arrangements have developed as they have. The starting point for discussing conferences as they exist today is the Supreme Court's 1984 decision in *NCAA v. Board of Regents* ("*NCAA*"). Before that time, the NCAA sold all television rights for regular season football. It strictly limited both the number of televised games and also the number of television appearances that any individual institution could make in a single year. Similarly, the NCAA plan did not permit individual universities or individual conferences to sell television rights, and the NCAA contract paid a set amount of money to an institution appearing in a televised game regardless of the attractiveness of the team or the game.

The Supreme Court's decision ended the NCAA television plan and effectively required all conferences and independents to sell their television rights individually. It would be difficult to overstate the effect of the decision both in terms of conference development and post-season arrangements. Before *NCAA*, a thriving group of traditional powers played football as independents. Among them were Notre Dame, Penn State, Florida State, Miami, Virginia Tech, and West Virginia, along with several others. With the exception of Notre Dame, however, none of those institutions individually was sufficiently attractive to television broadcasters to obtain a

national television contract. Thus, when the NCAA television plan ended, most of them were left with the option of joining a conference or facing the prospect of severely reduced television revenues. As a result, Florida State joined the ACC, Penn State joined the Big Ten and Miami, Virginia Tech, West Virginia and several other independents, such as Syracuse, Rutgers and Pittsburgh, joined together to form an entirely new football league, the Big East Conference. There were other changes as well. The Southwest Conference, which largely consisted of universities in Texas, dissolved and four of those schools joined with the members of the Big Eight Conference to form the Big 12.

This conference formation and expansion had a significant effect on the football post-season. The bowl system had never been very good at matching the top two teams in the nation. Only nine times between 1946 and 1991 were bowls able to pair the top two teams in the polls against one another largely because of conference-bowl affiliation arrangements. When there were a thriving group of independents, many of whom were highly-ranked, the bowls could occasionally pair one of those teams with against a highly-ranked conference champion in a matchup of one versus two. *NCAA* and the changes that it brought about altered that landscape substantially. Because many independents were joining conferences, they would now be subject to the conference-bowl affiliation agreements. Games such as Penn State-Miami in the 1987 Fiesta Bowl and Oklahoma-Miami in the 1988 Orange Bowl, both of which paired unbeaten and consensus top two teams, would not be possible in the future. This reality was of major concern to the bowls and to the conferences.

The issue reached a decision point in 1991 when the Blockbuster Bowl offered the ACC and the newly formed Big East Conference an affiliation arrangement that would have paid both conferences about $7 million annually to commit their champions to that game. That offer was extraordinary at the time. Had the ACC and Big East accepted that offer, it would have been virtually impossible to match the top two teams against one another in a bowl game unless the top two teams were members of conferences that happened to have affiliation arrangements with the same bowl or one of the top two teams was an independent that could play against a team in a bowl that had an open slot.

The chances of either happening were very small for two reasons. If a bowl had affiliation arrangements with two conferences, it could match the top two teams only if the champions of those two leagues happened to be ranked first and second. That did not often happen. Further, when a bowl had an open slot, it often would effectively commit that slot to a highly-ranked team after seven or eight games in a season rather than waiting until the end of the year. A team highly-ranked after eight games might lose two or more of its final games and drop in the rankings. What appeared to be an attractive matchup earlier did not have as much significance when the full season was complete.

To address these issues, in 1991, several bowls and conferences formed the Bowl Coalition. The Bowl Coalition did not alter the conference-bowl affiliation arrangements. Instead, it did two things. First, to obtain the participation of the ACC and Big East, the participating bowls – the Cotton, Fiesta, Orange, and Sugar Bowls – promised guaranteed slots to the champions of those two conferences each year. The ACC and Big East would not have turned down the Blockbuster Bowl offer, which was economically more attractive, had the four bowls in the Coalition not offered them guaranteed slots that would provide them a certain bowl

berths for their respective champions. Second, to obtain the participation of Notre Dame, the four participating bowls agreed to select Notre Dame each year when it was eligible under certain criteria. The Coalition arrangement also created a selection order allowing those bowls to defer filling their open slots until the regular season ended.

Because the Bowl Coalition had no effect on existing conference-bowl affiliation arrangements, it could not guarantee a matchup between the two top-ranked teams. It could not, for example, match a top-ranked team in the Southeastern Conference against a second-ranked team from the Big Eight or Southwestern Conference because all of those conferences had committed their champions to different bowls. Similarly, because the Big Ten and Pacific-10 champions were annually committed to play one another in the Rose Bowl, neither could be paired against a team from a different conference in any bowl game regardless of ranking. Nonetheless, given these limitations, the Bowl Coalition was quite successful. Twice during its three years of operation, the Coalition arrangement matched the consensus top two teams in a national championship contest at a bowl game. Given that the bowl system had created only nine matchups of the top two teams from 1946 to 1991, the Coalition achieved more than its architects could have envisioned.

The next opportunity to increase the likelihood of a matchup between the top two teams came in 1995 with the formation of the Bowl Alliance. Many of the conference-bowl affiliation agreements were ending at that time and the Southwest Conference was dissolving. Rather than renewing the established agreements, the Fiesta, Orange, and Sugar Bowls, along with the ACC, Big East, Big 12, and SEC, agreed to allow the participating bowls to select teams in an order that would permit them to maximize the chances of pairing the top two teams. Again, none of the participating conferences would have committed to the Alliance arrangement without obtaining a guaranteed slot in one of those games. They would have simply renewed their existing affiliation agreements. Similarly, none of the participating bowls would have joined if the participating conferences had not committed their champions to play in their games because they could have entered affiliation arrangements with individual conferences that would have guaranteed them attractive teams. The Alliance operated for three years.

Although the Alliance was successful economically, it had two weaknesses. First, by abandoning the traditional conference-bowl affiliations, it sapped some of the strength of the bowls. For example, during the Alliance era, the SEC champion did not play in the Sugar Bowl annually as it had traditionally. For those three years, the Sugar Bowl could not tell its patrons that it was regularly slated to host SEC champion or any SEC team at all. Fans of SEC teams were not sure what bowl would host their champion. In short, the Alliance experiment reaffirmed both the economic and athletic value of the historic conference-bowl affiliation arrangements.

Second, and as important, the Alliance, like the Coalition, did not include the champions of the Big Ten or Pacific-10. Four times from 1991 to 1997, either the Big Ten champion or Pacific-10 champion finished the season undefeated and ranked first or second. Furthermore, each time that occurred, there was another team from another conference that was undefeated and either ranked first or second. Thus, it was clear that any attempt to ensure a game between the top two teams in the nation would require the participation of the Big Ten and Pacific-10 champions.

That requirement presented a significant challenge. The Big Ten and Pacific-10 champions had played against one another in the Rose Bowl since 1947. That arrangement was part of the fabric of those conferences and, as I noted, the prize for winning the conference championship. Giving up a guaranteed slot in the Rose Bowl to participate in a possible national championship game elsewhere was a substantial sacrifice for the Big Ten and Pacific-10, and some presidents and athletic directors at the member universities of those conferences thought it was simply too great a sacrifice to make. Similarly, the Tournament of Roses considered the idea with trepidation. The Rose Bowl had built its tradition and value to fans and broadcasters by offering the Big Ten and Pacific-10 champions every year. It was not anxious to alter that successful formula.

Nonetheless, after much discussion, the Big Ten, Pacific-10, and Tournament of Roses agreed to alter their arrangement in two important ways. First, the Big Ten or Pacific-10 champion would not be required to play in the Rose Bowl if it were ranked first or second and could play against a team ranked first or second in another bowl. Second, to give the Rose Bowl the opportunity to join the other participating bowls in hosting a national championship game once every four years, the Big Ten and Pacfic-10 agreed not to play in the Rose Bowl if they were not ranked first or second.

These changes to the arrangement among the Big Ten, Pacific-10, and Tournament of Roses were the final pieces in the puzzle that established what is now known as the Bowl Championship Series. The BCS has for the first time in the college football history made it possible for the bowls to guarantee a matchup between the top two teams in the nation each year.

Those of us who were there at the BCS's creation and have seen it develop over the last 11 seasons can attest to its enormous success. We do not claim that it is perfect. Yet no alternative mechanism for determining a college football national champion will ever be perfect, without controversy, or without ambiguity. Indeed, those who advocate some different structure almost always do so in the abstract and with hindsight after having seen the season play out. This is not how athletic administration works. The rules and structure must be established before the games start and they must take account of a number of salient facts, most notably that college football consists not of one league but many leagues – each with its own character, traditions, bowl affiliations, and market value – and that the bowls are independent economic entities that have existed for many years and provide enormous economic benefits to their communities and substantial post-season opportunities not only to the top teams in college football but to almost every institution that has a successful season. Only five of the bowl games are part of the BCS. Twenty-nine others, however, generate tourism, economic impact and accompanying tax dollars for their cities and give approximately 5,800 young men, most of whom are not fortunate enough to play on conference championship teams or highly-ranked runner-up teams, the chance to enjoy a memorable post-season experience. No one has ever put forward an alternative plan of determining a national champion that addresses the numerous economic and athletic issues in any satisfactory way.

The BCS was not built on virgin ground; bowls had existed for more than 90 years when it was created. Even the most ardent advocates of an alternative system do not contend that the bowls should be abandoned or weakened. Thus, to make any post-season structure workable in college football, those of us who have the privilege and responsibility for administering the game

must take the assets that we have, account for the long-standing, valuable relationships that have existed for decades, and within the existing framework craft the best possible mechanism for determining a national champion.

The criticism of the current system usually falls into three categories. Let me address each of them in order.

One criticism is that the BCS guarantees bowl berths and money to certain conferences but not to others. This states the situation exactly backward. Before the formation of the BCS, each of the six conferences with an annual automatic berth in a BCS game had a very attractive guaranteed bowl slot for it champion or was able to obtain one individually. If the BCS were to disappear tomorrow, each of those conferences would return to the marketplace and obtain a similarly attractive bowl slot on its own through individual negotiation, most likely in one of the current BCS games. The primary loss would be a guaranteed annual bowl game pairing the top two teams in the rankings.

At the time the BCS was formed, none of those conferences would have committed to the arrangement had it not been promised a bowl slot at least as attractive as the one it could have obtained on its own. Moreover, it was clear that the BCS could never achieve one of its goals of annually matching the top two teams in the nation if it did not have the participation of those conferences and the University of Notre Dame. Since 1946 either Notre Dame or a team in one of the six conferences with an annual automatic berth for its champion in a BCS bowl has finished atop the final AP poll, except for 1984 when Brigham Young finished first. To make an annual game between the top two teams a reality, the architects of the BCS had to look at who had won national championships in the past and consider who was likely to play for them in the future. The historical record made that clear. They then had to address certain established relationships between bowls and the conferences in which those teams were members and persuade both those leagues and their affiliated bowls to try something new. No bowl or league, however, could reasonably have been expected to give up an established relationship unless the new arrangement guaranteed it at least the same benefits that it could obtain by itself. For the conferences, that meant guaranteed slots at least the equivalent of their then-existing affiliations, and for the bowls it meant guaranteed participation by teams that were at least as attractive as the ones that they were then getting from their conference affiliation arrangements. The BCS does nothing but provide those conferences that have annual guaranteed slots and the bowl games that hosted them precisely what they would obtain if it did not exist.

Of course, five other conferences in college football do not have annual automatic berths in BCS games. The BCS provides enormous benefits for them as well. For a number of reasons, none of those conferences had been able on its own over the years to obtain a bowl slot as attractive as, or that provided a financial payout approaching the level of, the other six conferences. Indeed, at the time of the formation of the BCS arrangement, there were roughly 18 bowl games and several of those five conferences did not have a guaranteed slot in any bowl game. The BCS arrangement expanded opportunities for those conferences in three ways:

First, it guaranteed the teams in those conferences that they would play in a national championship game if they were ranked first or second at the end of the season. That was in

sharp contrast to 1984 when Brigham Young was ranked first at the end of the regular season but played in the Holiday Bowl against a 6-5 Michigan team.

Second, the BCS arrangement guaranteed those conferences that a team ranked sixth or higher would play in one of the BCS bowls. That standard was relaxed a few years ago, resulting in even broader guaranteed participation. Today, a team in one of those five conferences is guaranteed a slot in a BCS bowl if it is a conference champion and either ranked in the top 12 at the end of the season or ranked in the top 16 at the end of the season and ranked above the champion of a conference with an annual automatic berth. This has created unprecedented opportunities for those conferences to compete in the BCS bowls. From the end of World War II through 2003, only six teams that are currently members of those conferences played in any of the BCS bowl games, and two of those were in the Fiesta Bowl's early years when it had an affiliation arrangement with the Western Athletic Conference. In the last five years, four teams from such conferences have played in BCS games.

Third, the BCS guarantees an annual payment to each of those conferences for making their teams available even when they do not qualify for the national championship game or are not selected for a BCS game and substantially more when one of those teams actually plays in a BCS game. Those revenues are far in excess of the amounts that any of those conferences has ever been able to obtain on its own from any post-season bowl game.

Thus, far from being "unfair," the BCS has provided bowl berths to those conferences that bring historical prestige, records of achievement, and marketplace value to the arrangement equivalent to what they would obtain on their own. For those conferences without annual automatic berths, it has expanded playing opportunities and economic benefits well beyond those that they have ever been able to obtain on their own. This has enabled those conferences to build their programs and to achieve national recognition that has heretofore not come their way. Utah's recently completed unbeaten season, Hawaii's Sugar Bowl appearance in 2008, and Boise State's fine run through the 2007 season are classic examples. In fact, Boise State only joined the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision thirteen years ago. The ability to play in a BCS game has elevated a fledging program and given it national exposure in a way that the prior bowl system never would have.

A second criticism of the current system is that it does not establish a national championship with any "certainty" or "finality." Most critics note that in some years, there may be several teams with a claim to being a deserving contender for the national championship game and that the only way to avoid controversy is to adopt some sort of multiple game playoff. As I noted, no structure will determine a championship with any "certainty." Someone will have to choose teams that will participate in a playoff, and because football can never have as many playoff slots as basketball, nor as many data points to evaluate teams, there will always be significant selection controversy. Moreover, the idea that a champion will be decided with "certainty" is at odds with reality. All playoff arrangements require some initial seeding of teams, which is an imprecise endeavor at best. Many different seedings could be established each year, and each may yield a vastly different result. Playoffs result in winners of tournaments that are seeded in a particular fashion and often after ignoring regular season results, as we have seen many times in the professional leagues. College football has chosen to go a different route,

largely because the bowl system has been effective in providing a post-season format that is more conducive to the overall missions of the participants.

Changes in the post-season cannot be considered in isolation. Intercollegiate athletics exists not as an independent function of universities but to further the education of the young men and women who participate in college sports, teaching such values as perseverance, loyalty, dedication, and teamwork. Nonetheless, it has an economic component that cannot be ignored. At most institutions, football is by far the highest revenue generator, and in many cases, it covers the vast bulk of the costs of the remainder of the athletic department. Thus, no school and no conference can possibly afford to take steps that would reduce the value of its football program. No matter how the post-season is structured now or in the future, each school will derive the lion's share of its football revenue from the regular season. This means that any revenue lost from regular season will have to be made up with incremental post-season revenues. Even if a playoff were to generate significant additional revenues over the current bowl system – itself a dubious proposition – it is highly unlikely to make up for losses suffered by conferences and institutions from a reduction in value of the regular season.

The BCS serves to maximize the value of regular season football by keeping the focus of the national championship chase on conference championship races and regular-season non-conference games. Indeed, since the creation of the BCS in 1998, college football has seen unprecedented growth in attendance and fan interest because the regular season games matter so much. For the 15 years before the BCS, attendance at all regular season college football games remained flat at approximately 25 million fans per year. Since the formation of the BCS, that number has grown each year, with a record 37.4 million fans attending games in 2008.

With respect to television, conferences have increased both their exposure and revenues. The BCS enhances television value because games that are important in one conference that might otherwise be of interest only regionally are exciting for fans nationwide. For example, in 2007, West Virginia and Pittsburgh played their traditional rivalry game on the last Saturday of the season. At the time, Pittsburgh was 3-8 and simply concluding what had been, to that point, a disappointing season. West Virginia was 10-1 and ranked number two in the nation. It had already sewn up the Big East championship, and in a playoff format, it would have already secured a spot in a tournament. While the traditional rivalry would have made the game interesting to fans of the two teams, had a playoff existed, West Virginia would have been playing for nothing more than seeding. Yet because of the BCS, West Virginia was vying for a slot in the BCS National Championship Game and thus the game had interest to fans around the nation. Fans of LSU, USC, Ohio State, and other highly ranked teams that were in the hunt for a spot in the BCS National Championship Game had reason to tune in to see whether West Virginia could win and secure a title shot. In other words, what might have been a game of regional interest at best became a game of national significance. That story is repeated in each conference every year as a result of the BCS arrangement. The BCS, therefore, has resulted in generating cross-conference interest in games and expands the viewing audience for regular-season conference television packages for each and every league in the Football Bowl Subdivision. That translates into higher rights fees for regular season football, which redounds to the advantage of each college and university. Broadcasters have noted the vibrancy of the game, and today, five major broadcasters carry regular-season college football – ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox cable outlets, and ESPN, which is a sister company of ABC. In addition, some other

national cable outlets, such as Versus, and a number of syndicators carry regular-season games. College football is healthier today than it has ever been in its history, including its golden era of the 1910s and 1920s when it had a far greater following than professional football.

Adoption of an alternative post-season format would dramatically alter that dynamic. While the NCAA Division I men's basketball championship tournament – March Madness – has been very successful, it has taken the spotlight away from regular-season basketball. The value of regular-season basketball for many leagues and institutions has declined substantially, and the number of national broadcasters has dwindled, as have regular season rights fees. In many cases, the incremental revenues from the NCAA basketball tournament have not been sufficient to offset the losses to individual institutions and leagues. A similar result in college football would be very difficult economically for all conferences and institutions, but particularly those with higher-value television packages and greater regular-season attendance. In an era in which schools increasingly face challenges because of state budget cuts, declines in donations, and great economic uncertainty generally, tinkering with proven success, especially given the experience from the basketball tournament, is not something on which many schools and conferences will gamble.

Third, the current system is often criticized by playoff proponents who contend that a playoff need not alter the great traditions of the game and that a bowl system can co-exist with a playoff format. This misconceives the nature of the bowls. Bowls are not merely games; they are events. Teams do not travel to them the day before the game and leave immediately afterward, as in the regular season. Rather, they go to the host city and stay as many as six days enjoying the hospitality of the bowl organizations geared for teams and fans. Fans travel to the games and stay for several days, thus generating economic benefits for the host city and allowing the bowl to attract local sponsors and support that help it fulfill its economic and charitable missions.

Bowls are particularly suited to the holiday period because fans generally have more free time and are able to spend several days away from home. No multi-game playoff can possibly be played within the short holiday period. Thus, using the bowls as playoff sites would be impractical. Sites must be chosen (and stadiums and hotels reserved) well in advance and well before teams are known. Therefore, there is no assurance that the participating teams and their fans will have any regional proximity to the bowl sites. Unlike in basketball where multiple games involving four or eight institutions can be played at a single site within a span of two or three days, and organizers need only fill arenas with 18,000 or so seats, major bowls have only one game that involves two institutions and must sell 60,000-70,000 tickets. We cannot reasonably expect fans to travel to distant locations around the country multiple times during the month of December or January and stay in each host city for three or four days. Our fans do not have the time, and most do not have the financial resources, to do so. Moreover, I am not aware of any football playoff in this country at any level in which all games are played at pre-determined neutral sites that may be thousands of miles from the homes of the participating teams.

Like all other football playoffs in the NCAA and the professional leagues, early-round games of any Bowl Subdivision playoffs would almost certainly be played at campus sites with only the final contest at a neutral site. As the playoff grows, sponsorship and television revenues

that historically have flowed into bowl games will inevitably follow, meaning that it will be very difficult for any bowl, including the current BCS bowls, which are among the oldest and most established in the game's history, to survive. Certainly the twenty-nine games that are not part of the BCS would be in peril.

These realities pose two very serious dilemmas for college football. First, the bowls and their host cities have been very good for the game. They have welcomed teams for many years, provided superb hospitality and experiences for student-athletes, supported the education of students through scholarship programs, and returned billions of dollars to the participating institutions. They have been loyal supporters, have helped build its traditions, and merit our full support.

Locally, they have become treasured assets in their communities. They generate economic impact that is substantial, and they provide numerous charitable benefits. There are many examples but just two make this point clearly. The two BCS bowl games played in New Orleans in January 2008 created an economic impact estimated at $400 million. In a region still recovering from the ravages of Hurricane Katrina, the loss of such an economic engine could be devastating.

In terms of charitable contributions, the Orange Bowl is donating $2.5 million to assist Miami-Dade County in renovating historic Moore Park, site of the first Orange Bowl game, to create a first-rate youth football facility, complete with grandstands and electronic scoreboard. Without the Orange Bowl's generosity, this project would not have come to fruition. While we are pleased that these facilities will be used to teach inner-city youth athletic skills, it is the mentoring, coaching, and influence from dedicated adult volunteers and the inculcation of shared values that will really make such a program invaluable. None of us in college football are anxious to jeopardize these or the many other charitable endeavors undertaken by all of the bowl games.

Second, as a conference commissioner, I have a duty not only to those teams in the ACC that are the most successful and that might compete for a national championship. Rather, my task is to help foster the success of all 12 ACC institutions. The bowl system allows each conference commissioner to do that. The ACC is fortunate to have relationships with nine bowl games today. Yet I know that in the absence of a bowl system, very few student-athletes and their fans would enjoy the chance to play in a post-season game. We must constantly be aware of the need to reward those student-athletes who by historical standards have had remarkably successful seasons. One example from last year makes that point. Vanderbilt from the SEC played in a bowl game last season for the first time in 26 years. The SEC is one of the toughest conferences in the nation. In recent seasons, Vanderbilt's football program has been steadily improving, but it has had to face traditionally powerful foes each year, such as Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama. Last season, however, Vanderbilt won six games, which was a signal achievement for the university. Now six wins would not get a team anywhere close to a playoff berth, but the bowl system permitted those young men to enjoy an appropriate reward for what was an historic achievement at their university. That opportunity likely would not exist in a playoff world.

There are many such stories every season. In the ACC, Wake Forest, which has one of the smallest undergraduate enrollments of any university in the Football Bowl Subdivision, struggled to compete against very tough competition in football. Yet in 2006, the team had a superb season, won our conference championship for the first time in 36 years, and had the opportunity to play in a BCS game. The program has continued its success since that time. The bowl system permits institutions that have such success to reward their teams and fans and to celebrate their accomplishments in a way that no other post-season structure contemplates. That is the reason that it has existed for more than a century.

The BCS has built on that success and enhanced it. The number of bowl games – and, of course, the number of opportunities for student-athletes – has nearly doubled since the BCS began in 1998. Each year the NCAA receives additional applications from cities that wish to obtain licenses to host post-season games. One of the bigger difficulties that we have in college football today is producing enough winning teams to provide matchups for the number of entities that wish to host bowl games. That is a happy problem to have.

As I mentioned, the BCS is not perfect, and those of us who must administer it have never claimed it to be. Nonetheless, it has given this vibrant game the most exciting regular season in all of sports. Most important, it is the best system for crowning a national champion that can obtain the support of all of the conferences and institutions that are necessary to make such a championship possible. It fits well within our academic and athletic calendars, is fully consistent with the educational missions of our colleges and universities, and maximizes the number of post-season opportunities for our student-athletes, coaches, and fans. We are always open to suggestions to improve the BCS or the game of college football as a whole, but many are persuaded that it is the best arrangement for the game and one that provides the greatest benefits for every institution, athlete, and fan. The historical record fully supports that conclusion.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to address these matters.